

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



P.O. Box 94004
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9004
(225) 342-7015
GOV.LA.GOV

November 2, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Landry
Attorney General
1885 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Attorney General Landry:

I read with great interest your recent comments regarding the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. This bipartisan effort began under my predecessor. As you are aware, this year, law enforcement, community advocates, the business community, Republicans and Democrats enacted historic reforms modeled off of efforts in other conservative states. Your comments in public and to the media indicate to me that you are either misinformed or knowingly spreading wrong information to the public in an effort to incite fear.

Under these reforms, prisoners serving a sentence for non-violent, non-sex offenses will be released, on average, 60-90 days earlier than their original release date, provided they are entitled to good time. As I mentioned, reforms that are identical to Louisiana's have been implemented in Texas, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Each of these states saw significant reductions in both their crime and imprisonment rates. For example:

- Texas: Since their 2007 reforms, the imprisonment rate is down 16%, and crime is down 30%.
- South Carolina: Since their 2010 reforms, their imprisonment rate is down 16%, and crime is down 16%.
- North Carolina: Since their 2011 reforms, their imprisonment rate is down 3% and crime is down 20%.
- Georgia: Since their 2012 reforms, their imprisonment rate is down 7% and crime is down 11%.

More importantly, you seemed to be very misinformed about how the savings will be allocated in terms of the money reserved for community grants. Specifically, these grants will be allocated through a request for proposal (RFP) process to community service providers in local parishes that provide data driven treatment programs that judges and district attorneys can use as alternatives to incarceration. We are reinvesting a significant portion of the dollars saved from these reforms into the entire criminal justice spectrum, which includes workforce treatment, training, and other programs that will help these offenders leave a life of crime. This is not just about saving money. It's about changing a culture of crime and imprisonment in Louisiana that simply wasn't working.

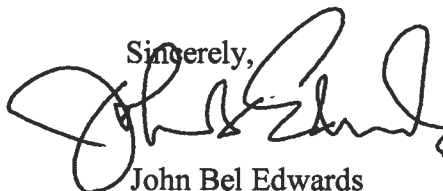
Not once during the nearly 100 hours of public discussion and the entire legislative session did you or a member of your staff offer testimony or input. What's troubling to me is your sudden interest in these reforms now that they are being enacted. For more than a year, the bipartisan task force held:

- 9 full, public task force meetings;
- 12 public sub-group meetings;
- Statewide victims' roundtables;
- Community town hall meetings; and
- 2 task force meetings specifically reserved for stakeholder testimony at the request of the District Attorneys and Sheriffs.

Your absence from the year- long conversations and debates held on reform and recent misinformed comments lead me to believe that you are more interested in fear mongering and playing politics than addressing a problem that a broad, bipartisan coalition in Louisiana has worked tirelessly to correct. That is unfortunate, especially when the data shows these reforms work. While you might choose to ignore these facts, the public is looking to us for leadership. Inciting fear is dangerous, and I would ask that you work with us, rather than against us.

Since you chose not to take part in the lengthy, public debate that led to these efforts, my team and I stand ready to educate you on the reforms that are taking place. Clearly, you need additional information, and we would be happy to assist. Louisiana Department of Corrections Secretary James LeBlanc has been a leader in this endeavor, and we would welcome the opportunity to visit with you should you choose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards", written over the printed name.

John Bel Edwards
Governor